

Councillor favours banning severances in subdivisions

Another severance application, in one of King City's mature subdivisions, went before committee of adjustment, and based on the report prepared by staff, it would appear that this application conforms to the King City severance policies.

However, the consensus opinion that I continually receive from the vast majority of residents I speak with on this issue is that such severances erode the character of King City's old, mature subdivisions, and that large lots are what sets King City, Nobleton and Schomberg apart from other municipalities. Residents who live in the old subdivisions continually tell me that they want King Township to stop these severances from occurring.

I understand why the severance policies exist. The consent process (severing a lot) is a legal process governed by the Provincial Planning Act. Municipalities are permitted to create severance policies that set criteria for severing lots. The King City severance policy was created to protect against the uncontrolled division of lots and to try to ensure that all new lots created through this process are in keeping with the existing neighbourhood. Without them, we could see the creation of new lots that don't remotely conform to the existing neighbourhoods of King City.

In fact, King City's severance policies are the most strict policies in the Township and I have heard from residents in Nobleton and Schomberg requesting that the same strict policies be adopted in their villages.

But rather than severance policies, I am seeking a greater degree of control. I would rather that a prohibition of severances, altogether, within existing plans of subdivisions be adopted. Such prohibition has already been achieved in some areas of Vaughan where some of the older legacy subdivisions exist in the areas of Thornhill and Kleinburg.

I want to be clear on the distinction. What I am talking about is prohibition of severances only within existing subdivisions where the process of subdividing has already taken place for the creation of a distinct neighbourhood with distinct characteristics, of which were marketed by developers and sold to purchasers based on that distinctiveness. This applies mostly to the older subdivisions, but might also apply to some of the newer ones.

Here are some of the most common comments I hear through discussion with residents.

?We bought into this old subdivision thinking that development was already done.?

?We bought into this subdivision because of the large lots, and because of the large space between houses. It seems entirely unfair that someone can cash in on a severance at the expense of the entire neighbourhood and degrade the character of the neighbourhood.?

Consistent with this feedback, and through the current update of our official plan, community plans and zoning bylaw, I have requested that staff include in their review that severances within existing subdivisions within King City be prohibited. I will also gladly support any other member of council who wishes to do the same in their wards.

But as with everything, there is a process that must be followed in order to achieve this. And residents must also know that this prohibition in certain areas of Vaughan did not come about without trade offs. Severances are a form of intensification, and intensification is supported by the provincial growth plan. In order to be able to prohibit this form of intensification within our subdivisions, we must create policies that direct intensification to other areas.

But if residents really want King City to retain its distinctive character, I think this is an important step that must be taken.

This is where the public process and debate comes in, and I encourage you to contact me, other members of council and our planning staff to let your concerns be known.

Cleve Mortelliti

Councillor, Ward 1